

AU NATUREL



THE AU NATUREL WOMEN OF MAINE

ASHLEY

received an email in an account not usually associated with the website on which my photographic work was then displayed. "I don't have any pictures yet. I am totally new to the modeling thing and noticed that you were looking for people that were new." We exchanged messages and agreed to meet halfway between our respective homes. In another email she asked for some guidance on how to prepare.

On the agreed day, I headed to the meeting place to scout locations. When Ashley arrived, we drove together to an open field, but with pockets of sheltering trees. I had her pose for a few shots in the sundress she wore, just to get a sense of how she moved and how she responded to the camera. Then I asked if she was ready to take off the sundress – which she immediately pulled over her head, and then arched her back so that her face and figure immediately picked up a shaft of sun. That instinctive first pose begins this portfolio.

After a few shots, Ashley started to move on her own, wandering into a wildflower field, settling down in fresh mown hay, carrying her sundress down a path in a nearby woods and lying down in a dell in the woods with a natural smile lighting up her face. "How can you be so comfortable posing nude for the first time, and doing it outdoors?" I asked. "I'm not shy," she replied. "I was a military nurse overseas for the last five years and nothing can embarrass me."

We finished our session, headed to our respective homes and I downloaded the cards. When I fired up the computer monitor, I was delighted with the images, even as RAW files. I immediately processed a few and emailed them to my partner – writing how terrific I thought they were and how happy I was with our session. Ashley wrote back "Wow...I do look comfortable in those! Those are great...we did an excellent job!" Ashley, you did the excellent job. I was just lucky enough to be the photographer with whom you went Au Naturel



ASHLEY 1 -- FIRST EVER NUDE POSE



ASHLEY 2 -- A WALK IN THE WILDFLOWER GROVE



ASHLEY 3 -- AT REST IN A PORTRAIT OF EASE



ASHLEY 4 -- BRINGING HER SUNDRESS FOR A WALK ALONG THE TRAIL



ASHLEY 5 -- ASHLEY IS HAPPY



ASHLEY 6 -- ASHLEY IS VERY HAPPY



ASHLEY 7 -- ASHLEY AT THE END OF THE DAY

CAMI

I met Cami on a gray day in a tough part of a tough town in central Maine. She was on her own, leaving a situation about which she didn't volunteer much, making her way one day and one job at a time, trying to save up enough money to "head south." She only knew one outdoor place to pose, a narrow trail hard up to a local stream with a hiking trail on a bluff above it and the back of a low lying office building across the stream.

As we walked up the trail, the sky darkened, and while it never really rained during the session, persistent random drops began to fall. We talked it over and Cami was afraid we wouldn't find another day to work. We found what seemed a secluded spot, Cami undressed, looked out at the stream and I began to click off images as fast as I could. No more than two minutes could have gone by when, from about 30 feet above, we heard the bark of several dogs, followed quickly by a woman loudly asking, "What are you doing?" Cami pulled her dress on, and we headed further up the stream. A fallen tree presented itself, a perfect prop. Cami undressed. I fired off images. Again we heard barking dogs. Again we moved on.

It went on like that for about half an hour. Then it started to rain. I wasn't about to ruin two cameras and their lenses. I told Cami I would pay her for the full session, we walked to my car, I gave her the cash, she signed the model release, I drove her to her building and said goodbye. A day later I emailed her some sample images. I never heard from her again.

Cami was tough. Despite the difficult circumstances she was doing her best to follow my few directions and give me the images for which I came. She never really smiled, but neither did she ever give me an unhappy look. She is who she is and I liked her for that. She is Au Naturel.



CAMI 1 -- A COMPLICATED LOOK



CAMI 2 -- HER TREE



CAMI 3 -- THE TREE, THE CAMERA AND ME ARE ONE



CAMI 4 -- I AM WOMAN, I AM PROUD



CAMI 5 -- AT REST AS THE SESSION ENDS

CHARLOTTE



week before our scheduled session Charlotte sent me an email. "Before we shoot you need to know something, because if it is a problem for you we will not have a good experience." The next few lines explained that Charlotte was transgender, still had her male organs but very much wanted to be photographed outdoors as a woman. I had never worked with a transgender model and truthfully did not know whether I could be comfortable, but over the next day or so decided the challenge was important for both me and Charlotte and more important was honoring my commitment to doing the session.

We met at a secluded cove on an island off the Maine coast. Charlotte told me her history, which fascinated me and helped determine what I really wanted to get from our work together. Most valuable was knowing she had graduated after four years from one of the largest and most notoriously social universities in the U.S. This was one very tough person, who had amazing self-confidence. That became immediately clear when she removed her clothes and immediately began running along the perimeter of the cove, flinging her arms in the air and yelling with joy about how happy she was to be "nude outdoors." Sadly, she was quickly moving too fast and getting too far from the camera for the images to really capture what was happening.

With the first burst of exhilaration over, we got down to seeking angles and situations in which Charlotte's confidence and comfort would become evident. In a site as varied as our cove, there were none where they wouldn't. While she was hardly an experienced model, Charlotte instinctively found poses that matched the place she was in, and in which her smile communicated she was truly Au Naturel.



CHARLOTTE 1 -- I KNOW WHO I AM



CHARLOTTE 2 -- THE SHEER JOY OF IT

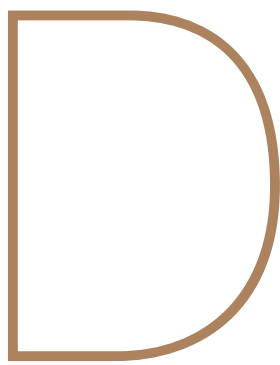


CHARLOTTE 3 -- AT PEACE IN THE MAINE COVE 1



CHARLOTTE 4 -- AT PEACE IN THE MAINE COVE 2

DYAPHANYE



yaphanye is not a native of Maine. She has lived, schooled, worked and modeled throughout the country and is now an important designer in the New Orleans fashion industry. But, when we first exchanged notes, she was living as far Downeast in Maine as you can get, and had been there long enough to pick up the directness of so many Maine women.

A friend drove her to the cove where we were to work, and he took off to meet with friends in the nearby town. He said he would be back in "a couple of hours" and Dyaphanye and I went under a shelter where she could leave her bag and clothes, and asked if she could leave on a ring. "Oh," she interrupted herself, "I got married three weeks ago and would not want to explain to my husband that I lost it." Wanting her relaxed we decided to leave on the ring.

She told me that working in "rough" places was her favorite venue, which I had seen on her website portfolio. When she saw the granite heaped in the cove, some smoothed and round, some sharp edged, she immediately began find places to stand, sit, lie and walk, almost never looking away from the cameras. It was a very hot day for the Maine coast, but the breeze was actually cold, coming off waters that never warm much above 50 degrees. Never once did Dyaphanye ask for a break, or stop to fix her hair, brush off sand or otherwise change what being in nature was doing to the natural look she knew we both wanted to achieve.

When the session was over, she dressed and walked up the road to where her friend was waiting. I joined them a few minutes later for the paperwork and to wish them well. Somehow, somewhere Dyaphanye had changed into a diaphanous gown of her own making. She had a picnic basket in her hand. "We are headed to a quiet place in the quarry for dinner," she explained. And they headed off as the sun was lowering below the tree line, very much Au Naturel.



DYAPHANYE ALONG THE STONINGTON COVE 1



DYAPHANYE ALONG THE STONINGTON COVE 2



DYAPHANYE ALONG THE STONINGTON COVE 3



DYAPHANYE ALONG THE STONINGTON COVE 4 -- ALL ANGLES



DYAPHANYE ALONG THE STONINGTON COVE 5 -- A PORTRAIT



DYAPHANYE ALONG THE STONINGTON COVE 6 -- MICHELLE IS BOLD



DYAPHANYE ALONG THE STONINGTON COVE 7



DYAPHANYE ALONG THE STONINGTON COVE 8 -- BETWEEN THE ROCKS AND A HARD PLACE

LOLA

ola is all of the complexities of Maine women in one beautiful person. A philosophy major from a prestigious college, when I met her she was making her way in Maine as a model, traveling throughout the Northeast doing everything from high fashion runway shows in New York City to fine art nudes in the wrecked factories and torn up railroad yards that range from Bangor to Augusta.

We met in an abandoned stone quarry and shipyard along the Kennebec River. It was apparent from the start of our session that she was a far more experienced model than many of the Maine women with whom I had worked. Wherever in the quarry we went, without prompting she moved through a series of well practiced poses. Even on the LCD screens of my cameras, I knew the work was good – classic fine art poses that would look wonderful in black and white. But, they were just that – posed and classic – and not the natural look I favor. I think she knew that.

On her own, Lola made her way down a rugged pile of rocks to the river, which I dared not try with two expensive cameras and several extra lenses strapped to me. I remained on a bluff well above her. Without the cameras right on her, she began to play with the environment, clambering in the mud flats over timber that had broken away from a lumber float, crawling through a fern field in homage to Maine painter Andrew Wyeth's *Christina's World*, pulling herself on to what appeared to be tie-up posts for the boats and barges that hauled away the granite and then, as the session ended, stopping in front of a grove of trees literally growing out of the stone, and facing directly into the camera with a look that said, "this is who I am." It was clearly a Maine moment. It was completely *Au Naturel*.



LOLA GRACE 1 -- IN THE LOGS ALONG THE KENNEBEC



LOLA GRACE 2 -- AS ONLY A MAINE WOMAN CAN FIND COMFORT



LOLA GRACE 3 -- HOMAGE TO CHRISTINA'S WORLD



LOLA GRACE 4 -- POST THIS!



LOLA GRACE 5 -- A PORTRAIT IN BOLD



LOLA GRACE 6 -- I AM LOLA GRACE

MELISSA

When I first worked with Melissa, we met on a beach near Cape Elizabeth in southeast Maine. It was early June, the sky was mostly overcast, the wind was up and the temperature reading on my dashboard was 52. Melissa told me she was "used to it" and "not to worry." As the goose bumps in some of the images from that session attest, it was that cold, and as the quality of her poses make clear, there was nothing to worry about. She is that Maine tough.

When we worked together a couple of years later, at an abandoned quarry on an island off the coast of Maine, it was a delightfully warm August day, the sun was remarkably bright, the sky that incredible Maine blue and Melissa was absolutely buoyant. As we started to work, she told me a lot more about what had happened in her life since last we met, and I came to understand both her beautiful toughness from the first session and the warm beauty of the second. At the first, I learned, she was coming out of an abusive relationship, was working in a variety of low skill, poor paying jobs and wasn't sure where in life she was going. By the time of the second session she was happily married, had become active in yoga and was training as a yoga instructor and was committed to her modeling career, from high fashion to swimsuits to fine art nudes.

The images from the beach session are thoughtful, and even Melissa's wonderful smile has a touch of whimsy to it. In the images from the quarry, she is bold and she embraces the granite with a smile the warmth of which matched the day. In either setting, and at two very different times in her life, she is a perfect model with whom to partner, and she is an incredibly beautiful Maine woman, because she is always Au Naturel.



MELISSA ON CAPE ELIZABETH BEACH 4 -- LOOKING AHEAD



MELISSA ON CAPE ELIZABETH BEACH 1 -- A SMILE IN THE WARMTH OF THE SUN



MELISSA ON CAPE ELIZABETH BEACH 2 -- A HAPPY THOUGHT



MELISSA ON CAPE ELIZABETH BEACH 3 -- ALONE WITH A THOUGHT



MELISSA ON CAPE ELIZABETH BEACH 5-- A FIGURE PORTRAIT



MELISSA ON THE GRANITE OF SETTLEMENT QUARRY -- SO VERY WARM

SARAH

When I met Sarah in the field near her home in central Maine, two thoughts immediately hit me. First, I had rarely seen someone as fit as she is. Second, while she was in her early 30s, married and had her own fitness training business, she had one of the most youthful and open smiles of any model with whom I have been privileged to work and eyes that showed her curiosity in the stunning natural setting in which she lived and worked.

We started working in the field immediately behind her home, and the way she strode into it, wandered through it and stopped to admire it made one thing clear – this was Sarah's field. Her ownership, comfort and pride were evident in every image.

Seeking to challenge her, I asked if there was somewhere nearby we could work, and she took me to a field a couple of miles away with an abandoned farmhouse, discarded blocks of the granite for which Maine is famous and overgrowths of wild flowers and grasses. Once again, as every image showed, she has the amazing capacity to "own" and be comfortable in any place she is.

Maybe it's the fitness. Maybe it's the sense of place. Maybe it's the mental and physical strength to run marathons. And just maybe it's being one with the land, the culture and natural resources of Maine. Sarah is Au Naturel.



MELISSA OVERLOOKING THE DEER ISLE THOROUGHFARE -- I AM MELISSA, CALL ME PROUD



SARAH 1 -- SARAH WALKS HER FIELD



SARAH 2 -- SARAH ENJOYS A PERFECT SUMMER'S DAY



SARAH 3 -- SARAH IN HER WILDFLOWER FIELD



SARAH 4 -- SARAH IN GOLDEN LIGHT



SARAH 5 -- SARAH IN THE ABANDONED GRANITE WORK YARD



SARAH 6 -- SARAH'S SMILE



SARAH 7 -- SARAH AT REST AT THE END OF THE DAY

TIFFANIE

When Tiffanie and I were exchanging messages about our planned session she let me know she had recently had serious surgery, had lost some weight from her already lean frame, was a single mother raising two kids and had not worked as a model for several months so she wasn't sure how long she could work or how strong she would be.

We agreed to meet and work near her home in the event the exertions of the session were too much given her recent experiences and I asked her to select a venue in which she would be comfortable and from which we could quickly get her home should the need arise.

We drove to a nearby park which Tiffanie had selected, set along a large lake. The day was crystal clear, with the intensely blue sky for which Maine is famed, dotted with scudding clouds. We started working in the woods, but the light was poor coming through the trees and the surroundings did not offer much with which to work. Tiffanie moved us to the water, which, while offering better light and many opportunities, was also exposed to passing walkers as well as boaters out on the lake.

After standing by the water's edge for just a moment or two, Tiffanie waded right in and splashed herself or let the winds splash her with the waters which in Maine are always cold. She stayed in for quite a while, as the goose bumps in one of the images will attest. Then, both of us having forgotten to bring towels, she chose to air dry, lying in the marsh grasses growing lushly and wildly, fed by the spray. And then she relaxed, and settled back in the grass with a softness and a comfort totally unexpected.

This amazingly strong Maine woman, fighting back from illness, raising two kids, lean as the proverbial rail and posing as she had not done in months was truly back in her element. Tiffanie was Au Naturel.



TIFFANIE 1 -- THINKING ABOUT HOW COLD MAINE'S WATER IS



TIFFANIE 2 -- GETTING WET A FEW DROPS AT A TIME



TIFFANIE 3 -- THAT WATER IS NOT SO BAD



TIFFANIE 4 -- THAT SUN FEELS GOOD



TIFFANIE 5 -- IN THE MEADOW SEEKING COMFORT



TIFFANIE 6 -- WARMING IN THE SALT MARSH GRASSES



TIFFANIE 7 -- AT PEACE IN THE GRASS